

Message Text

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11

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 T-03 IO-12 AID-20 OMB-01 NIC-01

CIAE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 GAC-01 RSR-01 INRE-00

/143 W

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P 051016 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3535

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY

CINCPAC PRIORITY

CINCPACREPPHIL PRIORITY

DOD PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 2511

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

DEFENSE ALSO FOR DIA

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: RP, PINT, PFOR, PINS, PBOR, MOPS, MASS

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE/ MUSLIM CONFLICT MAY COME BEFORE US- RP
MUTUAL DEFENSE BOARD

REF: (A) MANILA 2375

(B) USDAO MANILA RP 020702 Z (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MARCOS INFORMED AMBASSADOR
MAR 5 OF HIS DEEPENING CONCERN OVER DEVELOPING CONFLICT
WITH MUSLIMS IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. MARCOS DESCRIBED
SITUATION INVOLVING MUSLIM ATTACKS MINDANAO AND INDICATED
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GOP MILITARY OFFENSIVE UNDERWAY WITH DIFFICULTIES ON BASILAN
ISLAND IN SULUS. HE SAID CONCURRENT MILITARY CAMPAIGNS IN

BOTH AREAS WOULD PLACE HEAVY STRAIN ON LIMITED PHIL FORCES. MARCOS REPORTED EMERGENCY NEED FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT, LIST OF WHICH WOULD BE PRESENTED TO JUSMAG. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT GOP LIKELY TO RAISE DETERIORATING SITUATION CREATED BY MUSLIM CONFLICT IN MUTUAL DEFENSE BOARD (MDB).

ACTION RECOMMENDED: BECAUSE OF CLEAR US INTEREST IN SEEING PHIL/ MUSLIM CONFRONTATION DEFUSED AND OF PROBLEMS WHICH UNILATERAL US REPRESENTATIONS MIGHT INVOLVE, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS DEPT SEEK TO STIMULATE SERIES OF DEMARCHES ON MALAYSIA BY ASEAN MEMBERS INDONESIA, THAILAND, AND SINGAPORE AND ALSO UK AND AUSTRALIA AS WELL AS OURSELVES TO PERSUADE GOM TO RESTRAIN ROLE OF SABAH AND TUN MUSTAPHA IN ORDER HELP CALM CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. END SUMMARY.

1. IN MEETING MAR 5 ON SUBJECT OF OPERATION HOMECOMING RECEPTION AT CLARK AFB FOR TWO FILIPINO POWS, PRESIDENT MARCOS, WHO HAD JUST COME FROM SESSION WITH HIS TOP MILITARY LEADERS, CONVEYED TO AMBASSADOR HIS SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT DEVELOPING SITUATION IN MUSLIM AREAS OF SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES, BOTH IN SULUS AND MINDANAO.

2. BECAUSE A) MUSLIMS APPARENTLY HAVE COMBAT FORCES ABOUT EQUAL IN NUMBER TO AFP COMBAT TROOPS IN SULUS AND B) MUSLIM ATTACKS IN SEPARATE SECTOR IN MINDANAO PLACES HEAVY STRAIN ON PHIL DEPLOYMENT OF LIMITED FORCES AND THEIR LOGISTIC SUPPORT, MARCOS CONSIDERS SITUATION THREATENING. HE SPOKE OF AFP ELEMENTS BEING BADLY OUTNUMBERED AT SOME PRESSURE POINTS AND INFERRED, AT LEAST, THAT INITIATIVE PASSING TO DISSIDENTS WITH AFP IN SOME PLACES NOW ON DEFENSIVE. PRESIDENT TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT PHILS NEEDED IMMEDIATE HELP IN TERMS OF EMERGENCY DELIVERIES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT INCLUDING MORTARS, AMMUNITION BOTH FOR THEM AND SMALL ARMS, AND ESPECIALLY HELICOPTERS. MARCOS SAID DEFENSE CHIEF GENERAL ESPINO WOULD PROVIDE LIST OF EMERGENCY NEEDS TODAY TO JUSMAG CHIEF.

3. MARCOS' COMMENTS SUPPORTED EARLIER IMPRESSION (REF A) THAT MILITARY OFFENSIVE HAD STARTED ON BASILAND ISLAND (WHERE ARMED FORCES PHILIPPINES (AFP) TROOPS ALREADY MOVING AGAINST
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MUSLIM DISSIDENTS.) A FURTHER REPORT ON PROJECTED GOP MILITARY ACTIVITY IN SULUS INDICATED THAT AFP WOULD LAUNCH ATTACK ON LARGEST SOUTHERNMOST ISLAND OF TAWI TAWI, ALLEGED TO BE MOSTLY UNDER MUSLIM CONTROL, AS NEXT STEP IN OFFENSIVE. AFP TROOPS DEPLOYED IN CENTRAL ISLAND OF JOLO EXPECTED TO HOLD THEIR POSITIONS WITHOUT ENCOUNTERING MUCH OPPOSITION. MARCOS TODAY ALSO MENTIONED ATTACKS IN WESTERN MINDANAO, PARTICULARLY IN COTOBATO AREA WHERE OTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US INDICATES THAT MUSLIMS ORGANIZED

MAR 1 SERIES OF COORDINATED AMBUSHES OF PHILIPPINE CONSTABULARY
(PC) UNITS IN GENERAL AREA OF PIKIT.

4. MARCOS INDICATED HE NOW PLANS TO HAVE MUSLIM QUESTION RAISED BY PHIL MEMBERS OF MUTUAL DEFENSE BOARD AND ASKED WHAT AMBASSADOR THOUGHT OF THIS. THERE WAS A SUGGESTION BY ROMULO, WHO WAS PRESENT, THAT A SPECIAL MEETING BE HELD THIS WEEK. AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT THIS WAS CERTAINLY PHIL PRIVILEGE, BUT, WHILE MDB WAS APPROPRIATE FORUM, US MILITARY MEMBERS WOULD BE ABLE TO DO LITTLE MORE THAN LISTEN SINCE ANY DECISIONS, IF REQUIRED, WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE ELSEWHERE. MARCOS AGREED BUT BELIEVED IT USEFUL FOR PHIL MILITARY TO PROVIDE DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SITUATION TO MDB.

5. COMMENT: IN DETERIORATING CIRCUMSTANCES, ANY GOP EFFORTS TO ENGAGE OUR BILATERAL MECHANISMS WILL POSE SOME PROBLEMS FOR USG. IT WOULD BE IN OUR INTERESTS TO HEAD OFF SUCH MOVES WHILE WE DEAL WITH MILITARY SUPPLY MATTER IN MOST APPROPRIATE FASHION. EMBASSY THEREFORE RECOMMENDS SERIES OF APPROACHES BY SEVERAL COUNTRIES TO MALAYSIA IN ORDER ENLIST GOM HELP IN RESTRAINING SABAH AND ITS CHIEF MINISTER, TUN MUSTAPHA, FROM INTERFERENCE IN THIS SITUATION IN TERMS OF MATERIAL SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF PHIL MUSLIM DISSIDENTS.

6. ACTION RECOMMENDED: THIS MATTER SHOULD BE ONE OF CONSIDERABLE CONCERN TO OTHER MEMBERS OF ASEAN BECAUSE OF OBVIOUS POTENTIAL DIVISIVE IMPACT ON THAT ORGANIZATION. THEREFORE, WE SUGGEST THAT INDONESIA, THAILAND, AND SINGAPORE BE ENCOURAGED TO MAKE URGENT AND FIRM DEMARCHES TO GOM IN ORDER THAT LATTER BRINGS PRESSURE ON MUSTAPHA TO DEFUSE PHIL/ MUSLIM CONFRONTATION. DIRECT REPRESENTATION TO GOP ON
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OUR PART WOULD PERHAPS BEST FOLLOW DEMARCHES BY ASEAN NATIONS. DIRECT APPROACHES BY GOP TO MALAYSIA HAVE BEEN WITHOUT SUCCESS BECAUSE OF SABAH CLAIM ISSUE AND IT IS CLEAR GREATER PRESSURE NEEDS TO BE EXERTED ON MALAYSIANS. MARCOS TOLD AMBASSADOR HE WAS SENDING PERSONAL LETTER TO INDONESIAN PRESIDENT SUHARTO WITH PHIL AMBASSADOR FAROLAN WHO WAS DEPARTING IMMEDIATELY FOR JAKARTA. IF ASEAN NATIONS REALLY HAVE INTEREST IN CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL UNITY, IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT THEY PREVENT EXACERBATION OF THIS CRISIS WITH ALL ITS POTENTIAL REPERCUSSIONS BOTH IN TERMS OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AND IMPACT ON MUSLIM WORLD.

7. WE BELIEVE IT IS ALSO WORTHWHILE TO ASK UK AND AUSTRALIA TO MAKE ANOTHER APPROACH TO GOM, THIS TIME WITH A LITTLE MORE VIGOR THAN THE HALF- HEARTED INQUIRIES MADE EARLIER AT

THE REQUEST OF GOP. THESE COMMONWEALTH ALLIES MIGHT ALSO USEFULLY POINT OUT TO GOM HOW UNWISE AND UNREALISTIC IT IS TO SEEK ABANDONMENT OF PHIL SABAH CLAIM UNDER PRESSURE OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.

8. WE ANTICIPATE FOLLOW- UP REPORTING TOMORROW, AFTER MARCOS WILL HAVE TALKED WITH CINCPAC AS WELL AS AGAIN WITH AMBASSADOR DURING " HOMECOMING" RECEPTION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 07 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: sulserja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973MANILA02511
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730348/abqcefxd.tel
Line Count: 174
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: (A) MANILA 2375 (B) USDAO MANILA RP 020702 Z (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: sulserja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20-Jul-2001 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <31-Jul-2001 by sulserja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971113
Subject: PHILIPPINE/ MUSLIM CONFLICT MAY COME BEFORE US- RP MUTUAL DEFENSE BOARD
TAGS: MASS, MOPS, PBOR, PINS, PINT, RP
To: STATE INFO BANGKOK
CANBERRA
JAKARTA
KUALA LUMPUR
LONDON
SINGAPORE
CINCPAC

CINCPACREPPHIL

DOD

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005